

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Speaker: The very important question put by the hon. member has been asked several times in the last few days and the minister answered it.

[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS**STATUS OF DISPUTE BETWEEN UPI AND WIRE SERVICE GUILD**

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): This question concerns a matter which should be given immediate consideration. As the Minister of Labour is not here, I direct it to the Acting Prime Minister. The Canadian Wire Service Guild has stated it will strike the United Press International of Canada on March 16 unless a collective agreement is reached. The government having been asked to conciliate in the dispute, so as to prevent a serious shut-down in essential services, will the Acting Prime Minister give immediate attention to the appointment of a conciliation officer so that this strike may not take place tomorrow? Such a strike could only be to the detriment of Canada.

Hon. Paul Martin (Acting Prime Minister): I will have this matter looked into at once.

[Later:]

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister asked a question a few moments ago—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Winkler: What can you say to that one?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am asked what I could say. I will say what I could say to people who are on a dying ship, that surely this is the least I could do or say. However, before dealing with what I was going to say I should like to welcome back to this house, on behalf of all of us, the hon. member for Danforth (Mr. Scott) who has been ill for some time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am now going to ask the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour if he would be kind enough to reply to the question with regard to the imminent strike situation.

Mr. B. S. Mackasey (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, [Mr. Côté (Nicolet-Yamaska).]

a question was asked a few days ago, I think by the hon. member for New Westminster, and now by the Leader of the Opposition, about the possibility of appointing a conciliation officer to intervene in the proposed strike. I might point out to the Leader of the Opposition that a conciliation officer was appointed 13 months ago, and from there the matter went to a conciliation board last March. The conciliation board made a report last fall recommending only that negotiations continue. Obviously negotiations have failed to produce results, and the guild are only carrying out their legal right to strike.

Mr. Diefenbaker: So there will be no mistake about this, Mr. Speaker, the wire was sent at 2.05 today and received by me in the house. It states that the situation requires conciliation on the part of the government, and no statement such as the parliamentary secretary has given in any way meets the situation. It is just a case of procrastination in this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question period has expired, but perhaps the house would allow the hon. member for Danforth a question.

Mr. Reid Scott (Danforth): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to ask a question but perhaps you would permit me, on the point of kindness raised by the Acting Prime Minister, to say to my colleagues in all parts of the house how very good it is to be back and how very much I appreciated their inquiries, their kindness and their consideration while I was away.

It has been a very interesting experience to watch our parliament from afar for three months. The one thing it has convinced me of, Mr. Speaker, is that irrespective of the things that seem to divide us at times, the sort of common belief we have in the value of this institution and in the years of tradition for which it stands vastly transcends in importance the policies, programs and personalities that from time to time divide us. It is good to be back.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

HOUSE OF COMMONS**REQUEST FOR ACCURATE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ASKED**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Jack McIntosh (Swift Current-Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask